

I will never forget meeting another gentleman who has become my dear friend, Les Skramstad. Les watched me closely all evening. He was wary and approached me after his friends and neighbors had finished speaking. He said to me, Senator, a lot of people have come to Libby and told us they would help, then they leave and we never hear from them again.

"Max," he said, "please, as a man like me—as someone's father too, as someone's husband, as someone's son, help me. Help us. Help us make this town safe for Libby's sons and daughters not even born yet. They should not suffer my fate too. I was a miner and breathed that dust in. And what happened to me and all the other men who mined wasn't right—but what has happened to the others is a sin.

"Every day, I carried that deadly dust home on my clothes. I took it into our house, and I contaminated my own wife and each of my babies with it, too. Just like me, they are sick, and we will each die the same way. I just don't know how to live with the pain of what I have done to them. If we can make something good come of this, maybe I'll stick around to see that, maybe that could make this worthwhile.

"Find someone to use me, to study me, to learn something about this dust that is still in my lungs right now." I told him I would do all that I could and that I wouldn't back down and that I wouldn't give up. Les accepted my offer and then pointed his finger and said to me, "I'll be watching Senator."

Les is my inspiration. He is the face of hundreds and thousands of sick and exposed folks in this tiny Montana community. When I get tired, I think of Les, and I can't shake what he asked me to do. In all of my years as an elected official, this issue of doing what is right for Libby is among the most personally compelling things I have ever been called on to do.

Doing what is right for the community and making something good come of it, is my mission in Libby, and I thank Les Skramstad every day for handing me out my marching orders. My staff and I have worked tirelessly in Libby—not for thanks or recognition but because the tragedy is just that gripping.

The "something good," Les challenged me to deliver keeps our eye on the ball. I secured the first dollars from HHS 3 years ago to establish the Clinic for Asbestos Related to Disease, to allow the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to begin the necessary screening of folks who had been exposed to Libby's asbestos. Federal dollars have flowed to Libby for clean-up, healthcare, and revitalizing the economy.

Last Congress, I was pleased to introduce the Libby Health Care Act, to secure longterm health funding for sick people in Libby, and I will introduce similar legislation this year. We seek ongoing funding for asbestos patient care and continue to closely monitor

and support asbestos cleanup efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency.

At the first field hearing I held in Libby of the Committee for Environment and Public Works, Dr. Blad Black, now the director of the Libby Clinic for Asbestos Related Disease, called for developing a research facility so that Libby's tragedy could be used to protect the health of men, women, and children.

The wheels are on the cleanup and health screening, and the time for making Brad's vision a reality is here. Working together with Montana Congressional delegation and our State's Governor to develop a leading edge, world class research facility with the mission of one day developing cures for asbestos-related disease is exactly what Les called for that evening more than 3 years ago as well. He and the hundreds and thousands who suffer like Les and his family have my commitment.

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator GRAHAM, I ask unanimous consent that a letter from Senator GRAHAM to Senator FRIST and myself be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 31, 2003.

Hon. BILL FRIST,

U.S. Senate,

Washington, DC.

Hon. TOM DASCHLE,

U.S. Senate,

Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST AND SENATOR DASCHLE: The purpose of this letter is to share with you and my colleagues a development regarding my health.

This morning at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, I underwent successful surgery to replace the aortic valve in my heart. My doctors advised me to have this procedure now to correct a deteriorating condition that could have led to permanent damage of my heart muscle.

Accordingly, under Senate Rule VI(2), I will be necessarily absent from the floor and committee activities until my doctors clear me for a return to work. I ask that this letter be inserted in the Congressional Record of this date to explain my absence.

Given the overall excellent state of my health, the doctors tell me that I should have renewed vigor and energy following a short hospitalization and recovery period.

With the extremely competent medical care I am receiving, as well as the loving support of my wife Adele and our family, I am confident that my absence will be brief. I look forward to rejoining you in the very near future to resume work on the agenda that is so important to my state of Florida, our nation and the world.

Thank you for your good wishes, your understanding and your support.

With kind regards,
Sincerely,

BOB GRAHAM,
U.S. Senator.

REMEMBERING ASTRONAUT WILLIAM MCCOOL

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise today to extend my deepest condolences to the families of the seven astronauts whose lives were lost on February 1. To Nevadans Audrey and Barry McCool, whose son William piloted the final *Columbia* mission, I offer my sympathy and the sincere gratitude of an entire nation.

You raised an incredible human being. William McCool represented the best and the brightest of this country. Though his life was taken prematurely, his legacy will be felt indefinitely.

William was incredibly smart, a talented athlete, and a true patriot. The combination of these traits, along with devoted parents and religious conviction, produced an American hero. We mourn that hero today, as Audrey and Barry McCool mourn their son. And while we stand with them in grief, we should also express our admiration for the type of son they raised.

Many children dream of one day becoming an astronaut. A very elite few ever make that dream a reality. For William McCool, his dream was his destiny. As a child, he looked up to his Marine and Navy pilot father, built model airplanes, and became an Eagle Scout. As a young man, he excelled by graduating second in his class at the Naval Academy, maintaining a 4.0 grade point average, and earning advanced degrees in computer science and aeronautical engineering. Not applying to be an astronaut until his thirties, by the time of his last mission William had logged more than 2,800 hours of flight experience in 24 aircraft, including more than 400 landings on aircraft-carrier decks.

As a pilot, William McCool risked his life often for this country. On January 16, he left his wife, sons, parents, and siblings grounded on Earth while he soared toward his lifetime dream among the stars. William was kept from completing his journey home, but our gratitude for his service must not be short lived.

We must ensure that these 7 astronauts, and the 10 other NASA astronauts who died in pursuit of knowledge, did not do so in vain. We owe it to their children to continue the quest of space science, and we owe it to all our children to continue reaching for the stars.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR FARMERS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my disappointment and dismay that the Secretary of Agriculture has failed to meet the deadline mandated by Congress to establish a program of Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers.

In the Trade Act of 2002, Congress directed the Secretary to get this program running by no later than this week, February 3, 2003.